

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## U.S. Delegates Mobilize Global Response to Horn of Africa Crisis

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington — Dr. Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Biden, has led a U.S. delegation to the Horn of Africa to mobilize a global response to the region's worst drought in more than 60 years, which the United Nations estimates has left at least 12.4 million people in urgent need of food, water and medical care.

"The visit was important in terms of shedding light on the important efforts that are under way and the importance of continued support from the international community," Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration Eric Schwartz said during an August 9 State Department briefing on the trip. Schwartz and Biden were joined on the visit by representatives from across the U.S. government, including U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator Rajiv Shah, Special Assistant to the President Gayle Smith and former Senator Bill Frist.

The group's August 8 visit came as President Obama approved an additional \$105 million for humanitarian relief efforts, money the White House said will help fund "the urgently needed food, health, shelter, water and sanitation assistance for those who desperately need help" across the region.

Biden's trip "underscored the commitment of the U.S. government — the single largest donor in the region — to respond to the immediate crisis with life-saving assistance and investments in long-term solutions to hunger," Shah said in a USAID release August 9. "Ultimately, we know that it is smarter and cheaper to invest in food security than face the consequences of famine and food riots."

To demonstrate U.S. support for agricultural development in the region, Biden visited the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute in Nairobi and met with Agriculture Minister Sally Kosgei. U.S. officials say that, as a result of severe drought, the Horn of Africa faces widespread crop failure, livestock mortality and increased food prices.

The United Nations says Somalia has been hardest hit by the crisis, with famine now affecting five regions across the country and threatening to spread. The U.S. Agency for International Development estimates that more than 600,000 Somalis have fled to neighboring countries, many "walking hundreds of miles to refugee camps in search of food and water" in a migration that has put additional strain on drought-affected areas of Kenya and Ethiopia.

Biden visited the Dadaab Refugee Complex in eastern

Kenya, which Schwartz says currently hosts more than 420,000 Somali refugees, making it the largest refugee camp in the world.

She also met with Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga during her trip "to discuss how the United States can work with international partners on the best response to the crisis," the White House said August 8.

USAID said the United States has contributed more than \$565 million to the Horn of Africa in 2011 alone, helping at least 4.6 million people in need.

But Smith said that while the United States has played a leading role in assisting the region, U.S. leaders are also "aggressively reaching out" to the international community for support.

"We need other countries to step up with us," she said, adding that even as global leaders begin to take action, the United States continues to encourage all donors to "ramp up their responses."

## With Help, Congolese Can Manage Their Own Election

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration believes that the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) can conduct and certify its own elections, and is focusing its assistance in the run-up to a late 2011 presidential and parliamentary vote on supporting Congolese election officials, observers and police.

In remarks at the Wilson Center in Washington August 9, James Entwistle, the U.S. ambassador to the DRC, said many observers who are asking for the international community to certify or run the election, scheduled for November 28, seem to have "an unspoken assumption ... that somehow the Congolese aren't capable of managing their own affairs."

"I disagree with that completely," Entwistle said. "What we need to be doing is helping these brave, dedicated Congolese get training and resources and all the things they need so they can do the job themselves."

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is channeling much of its \$12 million toward civic education, as well as training and equipping Congolese election observers and equipping special police to provide security for the vote.

Entwistle said the United States, which provides one-third of the support for the United Nations' stabilizing mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), is also providing one-

third of the force's election logistics support.

He said the Congolese are developing the capacity to run their own elections, and that it is appropriate that the international community's support is less than it was in the 2006 election. That vote was the first to be held since the country's former dictator, Mobuto Sese Seko, came to power in 1960, and followed the December 2002 agreement between warring political factions that ended a devastating four-year conflict.

"If this effort required the same level of international support that it did five years ago, that would be failure, that we're not accomplishing our task of helping the Congo move forward and recover," Entwistle said. Congolese election observers will offer the most authentic indication that the election results "adequately represent what happened" at the ballot box.

The ambassador said there have been inevitable technical and logistical setbacks in preparation for the elections, but the DRC's ability to enroll more than 32 million voters "is a hugely significant accomplishment" given the country's history and continuing challenges.

He said credible elections in the DRC will require transparency and an open and fair campaign, and he hopes that all significant players in the vote will sign a proposed code of conduct.

Election transparency means "an environment in which candidates campaign, voters vote, votes are counted in tallies and announced in an open and transparent process," he said. Candidates must be able to "travel and campaign freely without being hassled or intimidated," and have access to neutral state media, while the media can report without being harassed or intimidated. Entwistle said women need to have the same access to the process as men.

In addition, the ambassador said the behavior of losing candidates is "a key benchmark of democratic development." Ideally, defeated candidates will accept the loss and pledge to support the winner for the larger interest of their country. By doing so, they express their support for the democratic process and they can plan to try again in the next election, he said.

"If that kind of thing happens, in my opinion it will be a crucial and very welcome indicator that democracy indeed is taking root in the Congo," Entwistle said.

The ambassador noted that Congolese he has spoken with have expressed a common assumption that there will be another election in five years.

"That gives me cause for hope and optimism" that Congo

is slowly recovering from its past violence and political instability, he said, and makes it "increasingly difficult for any leader or politician or party to subvert that process."

He said the U.S. support for the elections, like its assistance with the DRC's security reform, help for rape victims and efforts to improve the investment climate, is being done with the country's years of violent conflict in mind.

"Everything the United States is doing in the Democratic Republic of Congo is designed to help ensure that what happened in and to that country in the late '90s and the early 2000s, statistically the worst war since World War II, is to make sure that it never happens again and to help them recover from it," Entwistle said.

### Who Are American Muslims?

The total population of Muslims in the United States is estimated to be 2.35 million. Two-thirds (65 percent) of all U.S. Muslims were born outside the United States. They come from at least 68 countries.

"No other country in the world has such diversity within its Muslim population," said Zahid H. Bukhari of Georgetown University in Washington. "You can say that a small replica of the Muslim world is living in America."

Arabs, Pakistanis and other South Asians make up the largest percentage of the foreign-born Muslim population in the United States.

Slightly more than one-third (35 percent) of Muslims in America are native-born. More than half of native-born Muslims are African American. African Americans constitute 20 percent of the entire U.S. Muslim population. Many are converts to Islam.

There are about 1,900 mosques in the United States, and the vast majority welcome Muslims from many different cultures and countries.

These statistics come from the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, an affiliate of the Pew Research Center.

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